

Concerned Nigerians Germany e.V condemns Senates vote on Child Marriage in Nigeria, 31.07.2013

The Concerned Nigerians Germany e.V with headquarters in Kassel, expressed with dissatisfaction and great disappointment the resolution passed by the Senate recently to retain the provision of section 29 (4) (b) of the 1999 Constitution.

With this move, the Senate had approved the marriage of under-aged children in Nigeria. The new law, according to the Senate, would proscribe the 18 year-old rule for any Nigerian child to qualify for marriage.

The Senate resolved to alter Section 29 (a) of the constitution that stipulates that a woman shall not be qualified for marriage until she attains the 18 years as they deleted age specification for women being married from the draft constitution and left the marriage age for women open.

While deleting the section from the draft constitution, the Senate claimed that a woman is deemed to be "full of age" once she is married irrespective of the age she did so. And now the senate is claiming the law has nothing to do with Islam or marriage but renunciation of citizenship.

How is it that a constitution meant to protect Nigerians, now puts a vulnerable group, girl child, at the mercy of paedophiles?

Child marriage is a grave threat to the lives and prospects of young girls. It violates their rights, denies them of their childhood, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and limits their opportunities.

Statistics have shown that child brides have a higher risk of becoming victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse and murder.

Allowing section 29 (4) (b) to remain in the nation's constitution amounts to "a clear negation of Nigeria's commitment to different regional and international treaties on the Rights of the Child and Women which all prohibit child marriages."It places a girl child at the mercy of a man (paedophile).

Our Constitution should be vehemently protected against any form of injustice disguising as religion or culture. Politics should be separated from religion. Nigerian constitution should remain secular, tending to all in the society, upholding the rights and dignity of every human person regardless of personal beliefs.

We therefore call on the Senate to hearken to the voice of the people by reviewing and reconsidering the resolution to avoid child abuse.

We appeal to President Goodluck Jonathan not to be silent but speak out on behalf of the Nigerian people and also the House of Representatives to rise to the occasion and stand with the generality of Nigerians by ensuring that the voice of the people are heard and upheld.